Province of Alberta

The 27th Legislature
Third Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday, February 4, 2010

Issue 1

The Honourable Kenneth R. Kowalski, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 27th Legislature
Third Session

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

3 p.m. **Thursday, February 4, 2010**

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order! All rise, please.

[The Clerk read the Royal Proclamation dated January 20, 2010, summoning the Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to convene on this date]

The Clerk: Please be seated.

[The Sergeant-at-Arms left the Chamber]

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order! Order! Mr. Speaker.

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, the Speaker, accompanied by the officers of the Assembly, entered the Chamber and took the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Welcome. Join me in the opening day prayer.

Author of all wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, we ask Your blessings on all here present. We ask Your guidance in order that truth and justice may prevail in all of our judgments for the benefit of all Albertans. Amen.

Hon. members and ladies and gentlemen, I would now invite Mr. Paul Lorieau to lead us in the singing of our national anthem. Please join in in the language of one's choice.

Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!
True patriot love in all thy sons command.
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,
The True North strong and free!
From far and wide, O Canada,
We stand on guard for thee.
God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Lorieau.

That enthusiasm, ladies and gentlemen, will carry through this whole Assembly through the spring session. Thank you. Please be seated.

Entrance of the Lieutenant Governor

[The Premier, the Clerk, and the Sergeant-at-Arms left the Chamber to attend the Lieutenant Governor]

[The Mace was draped]

The Speaker: Hon. members and ladies and gentlemen, the Royal Canadian Artillery Band will now play a brief musical interlude, the details of which are in your program. The RCA Band, Canada's oldest regular army band, was formed in Quebec City in 1879. It was subsequently stationed in Montreal and Halifax. It has seen service in both world wars and in Korea, and it has travelled across Canada and beyond our borders. It was reconstituted here, in Alberta's capital city of Edmonton, in 1997, and the band is today under the direction of Captain David Shaw, who is in the Speaker's gallery. Maestro.

[The Sergeant-at-Arms knocked on the main doors of the Chamber three times. The Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms opened the doors, and the Sergeant-at-Arms entered]

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Ladies and gentlemen, all rise, please.

Mr. Speaker, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor awaits.

The Speaker: Sergeant-at-Arms, please admit His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor.

[A fanfare of trumpets sounded]

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, Norman L. Kwong, CM, AOE, and Mrs. Kwong, their party, the Premier, and the Clerk entered the Chamber. His Honour took his place upon the throne]

Speech from the Throne

His Honour: Please be seated.

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the Third Session of the 27th Alberta Legislature. It is my honour to deliver the Speech from the Throne, as it has been my honour to serve Albertans as Lieutenant Governor over these past five years.

I hope the House will indulge me for a moment as I reflect on what a privilege it has been for my wife, Mary, and me to see so much of our province and meet so many of its amazing people during my time as Her Majesty's representative in Alberta. This job has been the highlight of a rewarding career that took many unexpected turns, such as being in a Grey Cup, Stanley Cup, and a few other things. No one could be as surprised as I am that my road brought me to where it did. I'm grateful for every day and every experience I've had as Alberta's Lieutenant Governor.

Much has changed in our province since I was appointed to this role. The unprecedented growth we knew has given way to the deepest recession the world has seen in half a century. Our world may have changed, but our people have not. They remain hard working and innovative, entrepreneurial and compassionate, and, most of all, confident about our province and its future. That confidence is well placed. Our province has substantial cash reserves and low taxes, providing a solid foundation from which we can make a strong recovery. Albertans have worked hard to earn this fiscal advantage, and the actions we take now will ensure that our province emerges from these difficult times even stronger than before.

Alberta's Fiscal Advantage

Alberta's resource-based economy brings with it one of the most volatile revenue streams in North America, providing surpluses in good times but prone to sudden economic reversals. Your government took aggressive steps to create a cushion for the inevitable downturn, improving the fiscal position of the province by almost $50 billion while maintaining low taxes. A $23 billion debt was paid off in full, and nearly $25 billion has been saved and invested on behalf of the people of Alberta.

Most of the money we saved went into the sustainability fund, $17 billion in cash reserves which could be called upon quickly if the province experienced a sudden drop in income. These dollars are now at work protecting municipalities, social programs, educational institutions, and the health care system from the kind of cuts seen in other places. The sustainability fund enables Alberta to keep investing in the public infrastructure we know we will need for

tomorrow at a time when we can take advantage of lower costs. We will continue to strengthen the province's transportation, health care, and education infrastructure in all regions of the province.

The government's wise financial and capital planning is now supporting tens of thousands of jobs across the province. While other jurisdictions are cutting back and growing their infrastructure deficits, Alberta is improving its competitiveness and looking forward with confidence.

Alberta capital bonds will be introduced later this month, available only in Alberta and only to Albertans. Albertans are proud of our province and want to invest in its future. Backed by our province's triple-A credit rating, the bonds will be one of the safest investments possible in today's economic climate and offer Albertans a way to invest directly in our province. Proceeds raised through this sale of bonds will go toward building accommodations for Alberta seniors, including continuing care and supportive living facilities.

Alberta's fiscal strength has allowed the government to keep taxes low and maintain support for health and education. As we work to be back in the black in three years, Albertans will continue to enjoy the highest incomes, the lowest taxes, and the most advanced public infrastructure in Canada.

The sustainability fund is a great backstop in difficult times, just as this government planned, but we can't rely on it alone to carry us through. Government must live within its means. We must and will carefully manage spending, with a focus on key priorities such as health, education, and supports for vulnerable Albertans.

With a shared effort over the next two years this year's budget will bridge the recession and position Alberta to take full advantage of the recovery.

Improving Health Care

Alberta ranks near the top in Canada on health spending per capita, yet the results are not what Albertans expect. Your government believes Albertans deserve better results for their health care dollars.

The Minister's Advisory Committee on Health has recently proposed improvements to the publicly funded health system to make it more patient focused. Your government will act on these recommendations, including creating a new Alberta health act this fall and setting principles for the development of legislation, policy, and program delivery changes across the system. This work will be guided by Albertans themselves, who will be engaged in the evolution of the health system from its first steps.

Part of this evolution will be predictable funding. Budget 2010 will provide stable, five-year funding to Alberta Health Services. This will give our health care partners the security of knowing that growing cost pressures will be addressed. At the same time we will share the challenge of focusing ever more vigorously on better performance in key areas such as wait times and access so Albertans will proudly be able to say that their health care system is the best in the country.

The health system must be accountable to Albertans. Your government will go beyond statistical measures of the health system's performance and seek input from Albertans themselves on whether the system is performing to their expectations. We will report back to Albertans on action taken and progress made.

Building Safe, Caring Communities

Albertans believe that safe, strong, and caring communities are important to our quality of life. Government actions will continue to support these values.

The Alberta gang reduction strategy will provide a comprehensive, long-term approach to suppress gang crime in Alberta. Civil forfeiture legislation is already in place, and witness protection legislation will be tabled this session. We will bolster the front lines of Alberta police forces with 100 new officers, the fulfillment of a three-year, 300-officer commitment.

Government's goal of creating 14,000 new child care spaces will be met and surpassed this year, allowing us to focus on maintaining existing spaces and supporting the creation of new spaces in the areas of most need.

Your government will continue working with its partners to deliver on the pledge to develop 11,000 affordable housing units by 2012 and on the 10-year plan to end homelessness.

Social programs for Albertans will become better integrated and more focused on the people they were created to serve. These improvements will make it easier for Albertans in need to access information and assistance as well as transition between programs as they move from childhood to adulthood to their senior years.

This government is concerned that only one-third of Albertans belong to workplace pension plans. We will continue to push the national agenda for reforms that help people plan for a financially sound retirement. A pan-Canadian solution is preferable, but if an agreement cannot be reached, we are prepared to join with British Columbia and Saskatchewan to develop options for a regional plan to improve retirement income prospects for future retirees, of which I'm one, I think.

Increasingly Competitive in a Global Economy

The global economy is undergoing profound changes, with significant impacts on the lives of Albertans. Our people are naturally entrepreneurial, and government has supported their drive to succeed with training, information, services, and counselling, but we can do better.

Albertans know that a good education is an essential foundation to prepare for the future and that our thinking in this area must constantly evolve. In the coming months we will launch a new vision for education, making the improvements needed to ensure that learning in Alberta is flexible and ready to meet the needs of the next generation.

Your government will strengthen the province's research and innovation system under the Alberta Innovates umbrella. The new system will be more responsive to the needs of researchers and entrepreneurs and help Alberta maintain a leadership role in the global economy. Our great Alberta spirit of competition will do the rest.

Our province must be a magnet for the talented individuals and businesses its economy needs. Your government will ensure that the workforce has the right skills to keep Alberta strong.

As Alberta's profile increases in the global economy, our trading partners will expect greater contact and the ability to travel directly to Alberta. We will continue to work with the federal government to expand direct air access between Alberta and its key markets. This is what business, trade, and tourism need to be competitive.

Much of Alberta's economic growth will occur in the north, and we will invest in new transportation infrastructure to support this growth.

We are working toward a western economic partnership with British Columbia and Saskatchewan to create Canada's largest boundary-free trade and investment market. The three provinces will also work together on a joint trade mission to China and Japan to market western Canada to the growing Asian market.

Government regulation must accomplish our collective goals

while at the same time promoting business entrepreneurship, individual liberty, and creativity. Your government will aggressively pursue improvements to ensure we have effective regulations that are both clear and practical. For example, with respect to conventional oil and gas development government's approach will put more focus on assuring compliance with environmental outcomes rather than creating hurdles at the approval stage for companies accessing the land.

We will complete the review of the First Nations consultation policy and guidelines on land management and resource development this year, which will give us another tool to improve competitiveness.

Alberta's agriculture and agrifood industries are key and sustainable economic drivers of our province. We are a responsible producer of safe, high-quality food products that are in demand all over the world, but we need to break into new markets and beat the competition from other countries that export agricultural products, including the United States and Australia. So we will continue efforts to increase our competitive edge, foster value-added opportunities, and increase access to important international markets.

Alberta is now a major global energy player with enormous untapped potential. This sector is vitally important to all Alberta communities, with 50 per cent of our province's gross domestic product tied to energy in some way. Energy development is a partnership between Albertans, who own the resources, and industry, which develops them on Albertans' behalf. It's a partnership that has yielded tremendous benefits in economic activity that touches every corner of our province.

But the best days in Alberta's energy story are yet to come. Your government is committed to ensuring that this industry remains vibrant and continues to attract investment and create new technologies. We have the resources the world needs, including renewable forms of energy, and the know-how to develop them responsibly.

The review of Alberta's competitiveness will point the way and ensure that Alberta is an attractive place to do business. Your government will partner with industry to design the right model to encourage the investment in technology Albertans are known for. All of these initiatives are part of the government's plan to enhance competitiveness. As we lead the way out of the recession, we know there will be tough competition for investment and jobs. Those economies that offer speed, controlled costs, superior innovation, and extraordinary talent will flourish.

We must succeed in maintaining and growing our markets and attracting and developing people and innovation. This is the route to the strong communities, healthy environment, quality of life, and prosperity that we want to pass on to future generations.

Bill 1 of this legislative session, the Alberta Competitiveness Act, will signal our government's resolve to make Alberta the most competitive jurisdiction in North America. To do this, we must minimize the cost of doing business here, including the cost of regulation, while at the same time providing the world-class services that are the hallmark of competitive jurisdictions.

Alberta's next generation economy will see emphasis on attracting new industries in new sectors, serving the world's expanding need for safe food and sustainably produced minerals, forest products, and energy.

We will continue to work on a world-class, integrated petrochemical hub, drawing on the raw materials from the oil sands and adding value before they reach our markets, not afterward. The bitumen royalty in kind policy will accelerate this effort to promote new upgrading opportunities in Alberta.

A Clean Energy Future

Albertans value our province's environment. To protect our eastern slopes and boreal forest, we will continue to fight the mountain pine beetle.

Alberta's oil sands are the focus of a great deal of world attention. Your government recognizes that customers of our energy are looking for a better understanding of our environmental values and improvements in our environmental management. This is what Albertans want, too. We take great pride in our environment, and we are committed to ensuring that the right policies are in place to address the challenges of being a global energy provider.

Alberta's energy industry has met and exceeded every challenge to limit the impact of oil sands extraction and return the land to a natural state. Our history of technological breakthroughs and engineering excellence will go even further in the future toward shrinking our environmental footprint.

Around the world the drive toward cleaner energy is a fact of our times and a welcome one. The Alberta government and Alberta business leaders have chosen to lead by example in developing the cleaner fuels and clean energy know-how our customers are seeking.

As a result of the international agreement in Copenhagen we will work with the federal government to reach a thoughtful, continental approach to controlling greenhouse gas emissions, one that spurs Alberta-based investment in new technologies and the next generation economy.

While we must develop new opportunities to participate in markets like China and India, our economy will be seriously harmed if access to the U.S. energy market is impaired. Alberta fought hard for free trade, which has proven a boon for our people. We cannot lose those hard-fought advantages. We must secure access to the emerging clean energy market south of the border.

To be competitive in the new global marketplace, we must take a hard look at our own backyard. Albertans value a clean and sustainable environment, but that is not always the perception beyond our borders. Your government will continue to promote Alberta and the amazing technological advances our industries have made in environmental management such as their work on carbon capture and storage, and we will act to improve environmental performance in the oil sands. We will continue to invest in research and technology solutions to the significant environmental challenges posed by oil sands development, including the eventual elimination of tailings ponds.

Energy conservation and renewable sources of energy will become popular economic choices for consumers in the 21st century. Our province has what it takes to succeed in this economic environment, the freedom to create and the spirit to achieve.

These qualities were illustrated recently when 110 Albertans participated in the Solar Decathlon, an international competition hosted by the United States Department of Energy, in which 20 selected teams of university and college students from around the globe competed to design, build, and operate the most attractive, practical, and energy efficient solar-powered home. Team Alberta's home reflected not only the natural landscape of our province but also our values: innovation, excellence in education, and the willingness to meet the energy challenges our world faces head-on. I should mention that Team Alberta placed sixth against the best in the world, an outstanding achievement for its first time in this competition. I should say that project manager Mark Blackwell and representatives of his team are with us today. I would ask that Mark and his fellow solar decathletes rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly. Thank you.

Alberta's Place in Canada

Albertans have always been committed Canadians. Our province's economic success has provided benefits across the country, and our economic renewal will be an essential part of the nation's economic recovery.

Albertans are proud contributors to the well-being of our country, and we have a right to be treated fairly under universal federal programs like health care or unemployment insurance. If a person is sick or out of work, the challenge to that family is no less difficult in Alberta than in any other province. Whenever Alberta receives less than other provinces for basic transfers, your government will work with the federal government to provide options to address that fiscal imbalance and close the gap. Equality is a matter of principle and basic fairness, the very hallmark of our nation.

A strong economic recovery requires an Alberta that is constantly striving to be better, stronger, and smarter. We will use expert advice from the Premier's Council for Economic Strategy to set a path to a secure and prosperous future for Albertans.

We will proudly share Alberta's story at the Olympics and elsewhere on the global stage to make the world more aware of our unique talents, products, and capabilities.

We will be a leader in clean energy production.

We will help the forestry and agricultural sectors adapt to new market realities and seize new opportunities.

We will continue to build world-class universities of the 21st century.

We will foster a competitive and innovative economy.

And we will build public services and transportation systems that unite our communities in commerce and culture.

Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen, and may God bless you all.

God bless Alberta.

God bless Canada.

God save the Queen. [Standing ovation]

Thank you for that great farewell.

The Speaker: Ladies and gentlemen, please remain standing.

Your Honour, on behalf of all of the people here and on behalf of all of the citizens of Alberta thank you so much for being Alberta's Lieutenant Governor, and thank you as well for sharing your very delightful and gracious partner, Mrs. Kwong, with the people of Alberta. [Standing ovation]

I would now like to call on Mr. Paul Lorieau to lead us in the singing of *God Save The Queen*.

Hon. Members and Guests:

God save our gracious Queen,
long live our noble Queen,
God save The Queen!
Send her victorious,
happy and glorious,
long to reign over us;
God save The Queen!

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order!

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, Their Honours, their party, and the Premier left the Chamber as a fanfare of trumpets sounded]

The Speaker: Please be seated.

[The Mace was uncovered]

[The Premier returned to the Chamber]

Tablings

The Speaker: Hon. members, I have the honour now to table a copy of the speech graciously given by His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor.

Introduction of Bills

Bill 1
Alberta Competitiveness Act

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 1, the Alberta Competitiveness Act.

The world-wide recession has highlighted the fact that we're living in a truly global marketplace. One economy can greatly influence another. That is why we need to look at the world as being one economy, one in which Alberta is determined to be a leader. To do this, we need to make sure that we are as competitive as possible.

Our government is committed to creating the conditions that will attract new businesses, innovators, and the next generation of entrepreneurs to our province. That's what Bill 1 is all about. If passed, the Alberta Competitiveness Act will increase collaboration among government, industry, business, and Albertans to enhance Alberta's competitiveness. This is the best assurance of sustainable prosperity and a high quality of life for Albertans for generations to come.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 1 read a first time]

Motions

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, I move that the speech from His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor to this Assembly be taken into consideration the week of February 8, 2010.

[Motion carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that the Assembly stand adjourned until Monday, February 8, 2010, at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 3:47 p.m. to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]

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Bill Status Report for the 27th Legislature - 3rd Session (2010)

Activity to February 04, 2010

The Bill sponsor's name is in brackets following the Bill title. If it is a money Bill, ($) will appear between the title and the sponsor's name. Numbers following each Reading refer to Hansard pages where the text of debates is found; dates for each Reading are in brackets following the page numbers. Bills numbered 200 or higher are Private Members' Public Bills. Bills with lower numbers are Government Bills. Bills numbered Pr1, etc., are Private Bills.

*An asterisk beside a Bill number indicates an amendment was passed to that Bill; the Committee line shows the precise date of the amendment.

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If it comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel for details at (780) 427-2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned a chapter number until the conclusion of the fall sittings.

1 Alberta Competitiveness Act (Stelmach)

First Reading -- 4 (Feb. 4 aft., passed)

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Select Special Auditor General Search Committee

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Lund

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Campbell
Lukaszuk
MacDonald
Marz
Notley
Rogers

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Mrs. Forsyth
Deputy Chair: Mr. Elniski

Blakeman
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DeLong
Denis
Johnston
Kang
MacDonald

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Doerksen
Forsyth
Jacobs
MacDonald
McQueen
Olson
Quest
Rodney
Sandhu
Sarich
Taft

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Hancock

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Berger
Calahasen
DeLong
Doerksen
Forsyth
Johnson
Leskiw
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McFarland
Mitzel
Notley
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Pastoor
Redford
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